

Section 2

The Beginnings of Islam

Prepare to Read

Objectives

In this section you will

1. Learn about the Arabian Peninsula, its nomadic people, and its centers of trade.
2. Find out about the life and mission of the Muslim prophet Muhammad.
3. Learn about Muslim beliefs.

Taking Notes

As you read this section, keep track of the most important ideas about the beginnings of Islam. Copy the outline started below, and add to it as you read.

I. The Arabian Peninsula

A. Nomadic Bedouins

- 1.
- 2.

B. Mecca: A center of trade



Target Reading Skill

Preview and Predict

Making predictions about your text helps you set a purpose for reading and remember what you read. Before you begin, look at the headings, photos, and anything else that stands out. Then predict what the text might be about. For example, you might predict that this section will tell about the origins of Muslim beliefs. As you read, if what you learn doesn't support your prediction, revise your prediction.

Key Terms

- **Muhammad** (muh HAM ud) *n.* the prophet and founder of Islam
- **nomads** (NOH madz) *n.* people with no permanent home, who move from place to place in search of food, water, or pasture
- **caravan** (KA ruh van) *n.* a group of traders traveling together for safety
- **Mecca** (MEK uh) *n.* an Arabian trading center and Muhammad's birthplace
- **Muslim** (MUZ lum) *n.* a follower of Islam
- **mosque** (mahsk) *n.* a Muslim house of worship
- **Quran** (koo RAHN) *n.* the holy book of Islam



In this miniature painting, an angel's announcement is symbolized by the blowing of a horn.

The religion of Islam (IS lahm) teaches that in about 610, the prophet **Muhammad** (muh HAM ud) went into a cave in the Arabian mountains to pray. (A prophet is a person who is regarded as speaking for God.) It is said that while Muhammad was inside the cave, he heard the voice of an angel. God told Muhammad through the angel that there was only one God, that God had created people, and that God would teach His people. The angel told Muhammad that Muhammad was to be God's messenger.

According to Islamic teaching, Muhammad was frightened and unsure that he was worthy of such an important mission. But he obeyed. God continued to send Muhammad messages, which Muhammad shared with the people of the Arabian Peninsula. These teachings became a religion that brought great changes to the region. And in the centuries after Muhammad's death, the new religion spread to many parts of the world.

The Arabian Peninsula

In Muhammad's time, as today, much of the Arabian Peninsula was covered by desert. Although surrounded by water, the peninsula has no major rivers and receives little rainfall. Trade with neighboring peoples supported the growth of towns along trade routes. And many groups of Bedouins (BED oo inz) made their homes among the shifting sand dunes of the desert.

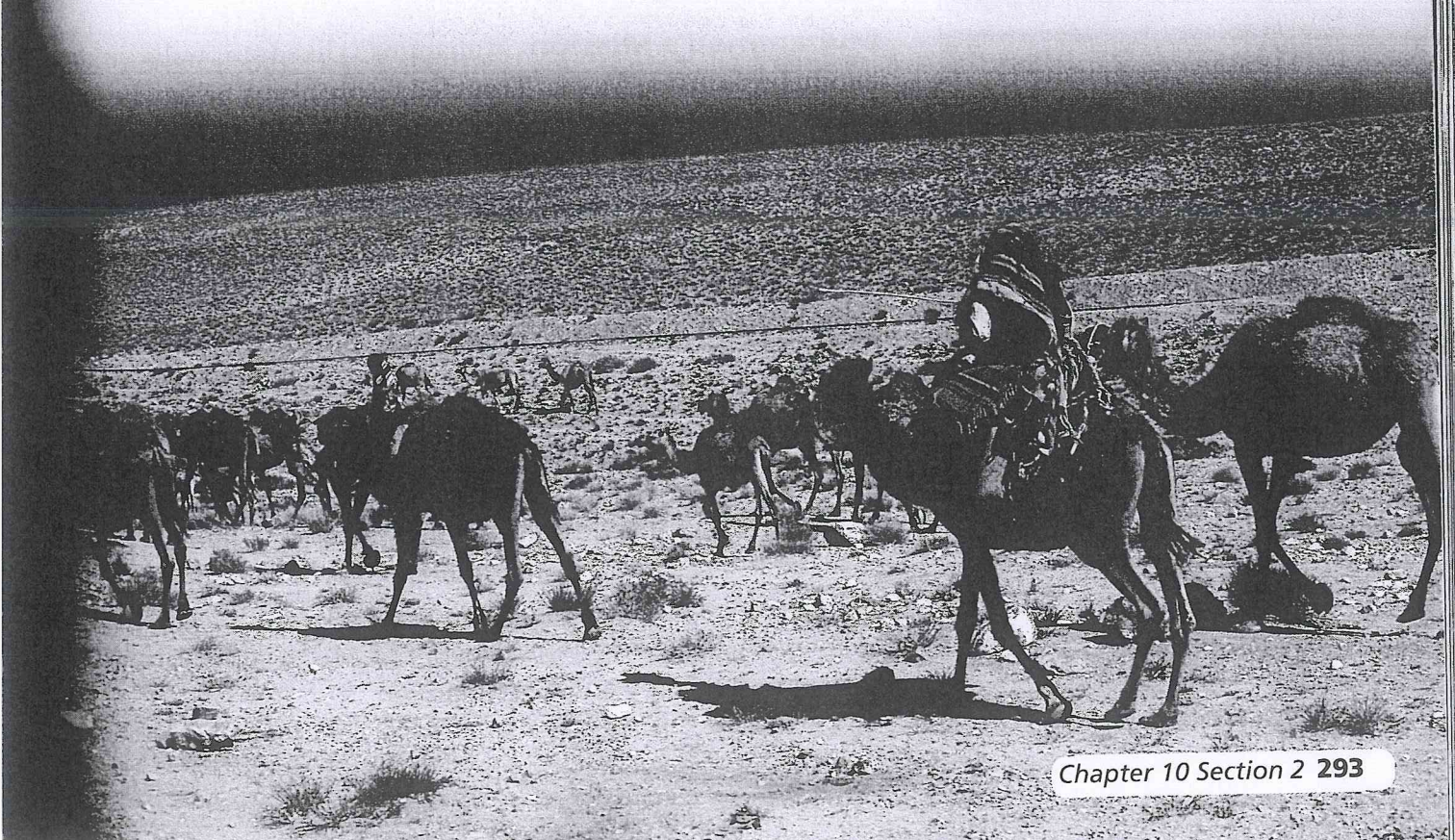
Nomadic Bedouins The Bedouins were **nomads**, or people who have no permanent home but move from place to place in search of food, water, and pasture. The Arabian desert yielded little food for the Bedouins or for their herds of sheep, camels, and goats. Water was also scarce—for people as well as for animals.

To make their way across the desert, the Bedouins followed traditional routes from one oasis to another. An oasis is a green area within a desert, fed by underground water. These all-important oases provided plenty of water for the nomads and their animals.

Because of their knowledge of the desert and its oases, the Bedouins also worked as guides for traders. They helped traders travel across the desert in large groups called **caravans**. These desert caravans depended on camels, which carried both people and their goods. Camels are sturdy animals with a special ability to store water for long periods.

Bedouins Today

These Bedouins in the Sinai desert of Egypt are still nomads like their ancestors. **Predict** What kinds of events and conditions might prevent the Bedouins from continuing their traditional way of life?





Links to Economics

New Business Methods

From 750 to 1350, Muslims like the Arab traders shown above dominated the trade routes in Arabia and far beyond. They not only found new goods to trade, they also developed new ways to trade. Muslim merchants bought and sold goods on credit and set up locations for exchanging currency. To avoid carrying large sums of cash across thousands of miles, they developed a way to transfer money from one location to another—a forerunner to today's checks. Merchants could deposit funds at one location and use a letter of credit to withdraw those funds at a different location.

Mecca: A Center of Trade The oases on the Arabian Peninsula became busy trading centers. One of the most important was Mecca (MEK uh). From Mecca, great caravans traveled northwest to markets in what is now Syria. From Syria, goods could be shipped across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Other caravans traveled northeast from Mecca. They made a dangerous journey across the desert to markets in the area now known as Iraq. Trade was also conducted with Yemen to the south. Precious goods traded along these routes included perfume and spices, incense, expensive cloth, elephant tusks, and gold.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did Bedouins make good guides for traders?

The Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad was born and grew up in the trading center of Mecca. His great-grandfather had been a wealthy merchant. However, by the time Muhammad was born in about 570, his family was poor. As a young man, Muhammad worked on caravans. His job took him to distant places, including Syria, which was then part of the Byzantine Empire.

Muhammad's Mission Muhammad liked to walk in the mountains outside Mecca. Troubled by problems he saw in society, he liked to be alone to pray and think. When Muhammad was 40 years old, he first heard God speak to him through the angel in the cave. God told him that people would submit to, or agree to obey, the one true God. In time, a person who accepted the teachings of Muhammad came to be known as a **Muslim** (MUZ lum), "a person who submits." The religion of Muslims is called Islam.

Muhammad preached God's message—that all people were brothers and sisters in a community established by God—but few people in Mecca listened. They thought Muhammad's teachings threatened their old gods. They feared that abandoning their old gods would end Mecca's importance as a religious center. Many Arabs traveled to Mecca in order to pray at an ancient shrine called the Kaaba (KAH buh). People in Mecca also feared that Muhammad might gain political power.

Muhammad in Medina In 622, Muhammad and his followers were invited to Yathrib (yah THREEB), a city north of Mecca. The people there regarded Muhammad as a prophet. This movement of early Muslims is known as the hijra (hih JY ruh), or “the migration.” The year of the hijra—622 in the calendar used in the United States—became year 1 on the Muslim calendar.

After the hijra, the name of Yathrib was changed to Medina. This name means “city” and is short for “city of the prophet.” Medina quickly became an important Islamic center. But Islam did not remain limited to Medina. In 630, Muhammad returned to Mecca—this time in triumph. By the time Muhammad died two years later, the new religion of Islam had spread all across the Arabian Peninsula.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did Muhammad go to Yathrib?

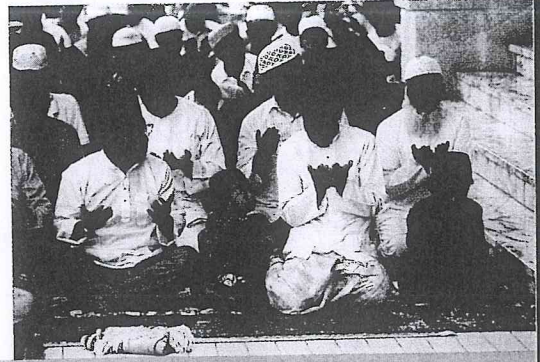
Muslim Belief

A muezzin (myoo EZ in), a man who calls Muslims to worship, looks out over the city and begins his loud call. The muezzin’s voice echoes in all directions: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” In Arabic, the word for God is *Allah*. Five times each day, Muslims are called to worship in this way. And five times a day, every faithful Muslim stops whatever he or she is doing to pray.

Some Muslims gather in a house of worship called a **mosque** (mahsk). Others kneel outside.

Wherever Muslims are in the world—in the Arabian Peninsula, in North Africa, or in the United States—they kneel in a direction that faces toward Mecca. “There is no god but God,” the faithful respond, “and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”

The Five Pillars of Islam Basic Muslim beliefs are expressed in the Five Pillars of Islam. These practices, shown in the table above, are the foundations of Islam. Muslims regard these pillars as sacred duties. The fifth pillar—the hajj (haj), or pilgrimage to the Kaaba—is required only of those who are able to travel to Mecca.



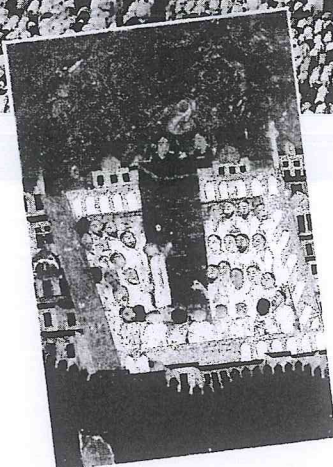
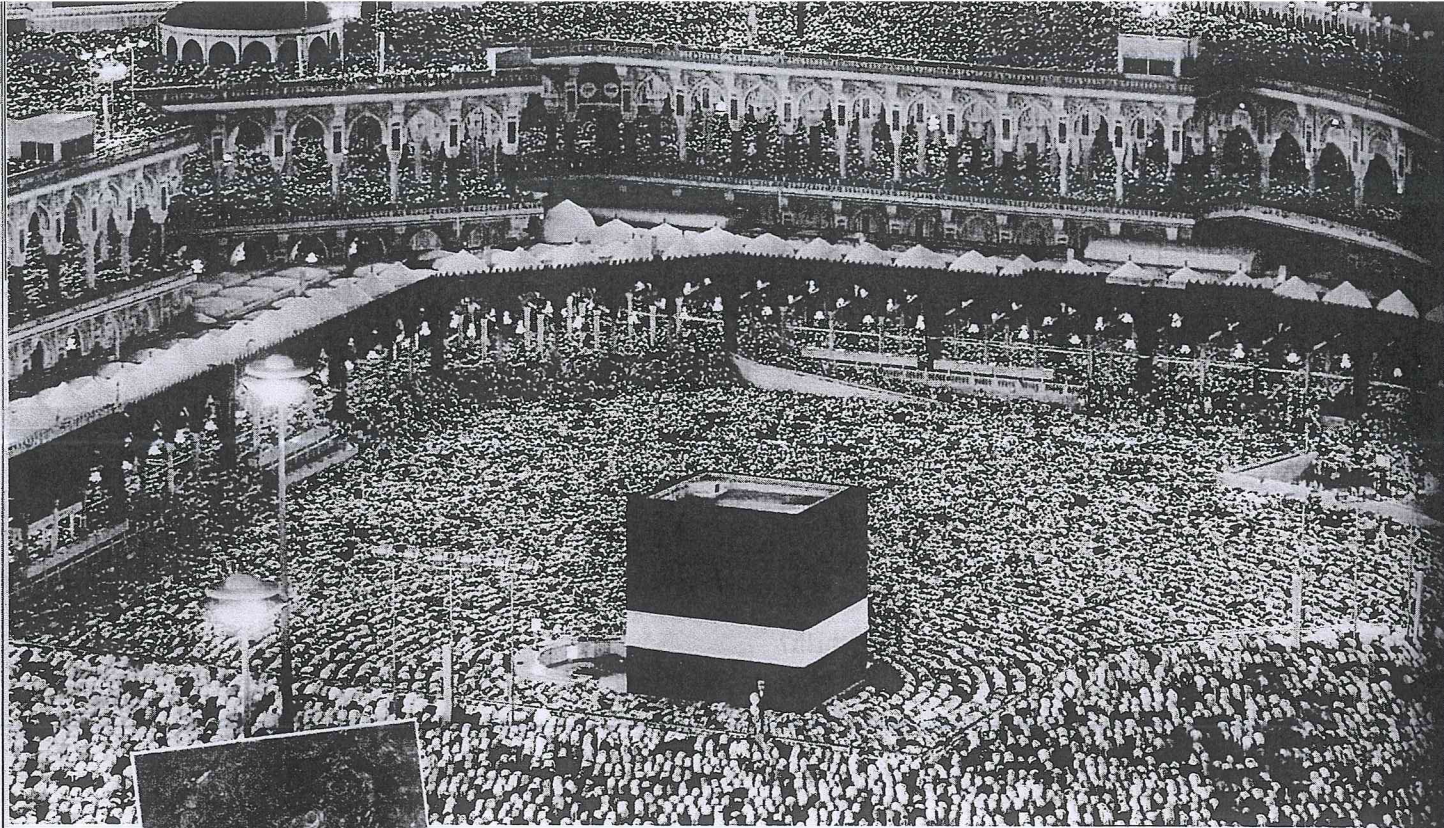
The Five Pillars of Islam

Pillar	Description
Declaration of Faith	Muslims must regularly declare the belief that there is only one God and Muhammad is God’s messenger.
Prayer	Muslims must pray five times each day, facing in the direction of the holy city of Mecca.
Almsgiving	Muslims must give alms, or money that goes to the needy.
Fasting	Muslims must fast during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
Pilgrimage	Muslims must make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least one time in their lives if they are able.

Chart Skills

The photo above shows Muslim men and boys worshiping at a mosque in Brunei, in Southeast Asia. **Identify** Which pillar of Islam are they fulfilling?

Analyze Information Which one of the five pillars would it be most difficult to fulfill? Explain why.



The Hajj

Muslims making a hajj to the Kaaba wear special white, seamless garments. The large photo shows a modern hajj. The small painting is from a 1410 manuscript. **Compare** What can you conclude about this tradition by comparing the two pictures?



Preview and Predict

Based on what you have read so far, is your prediction on target? If not, revise or change your prediction now.

The Quran The holy book of Islam is called the Quran (koo RAHN). It contains the messages God revealed to Muhammad, including the rules of Islam. Many Muslims have memorized the Quran. Muslims believe that the meaning and beauty of the Quran are best appreciated in its original language. Therefore, many converts to Islam learn Arabic. This shared language has helped unite Muslims from many regions.

Like the Torah (TOH ruh), the Jewish holy book, and the Christian Bible, the Quran contains many kinds of writing, including stories, promises, warnings, and instructions. There is a reason for the similarity of the Quran to Jewish and Christian holy books. Muslims, like Jews and Christians, believe in one God. They regard Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses as important people in their religious history. Muhammad saw himself as the last prophet in a long line of prophets that included all these men. Muhammad felt respect for Jews and Christians, whom he called “people of the Book.”

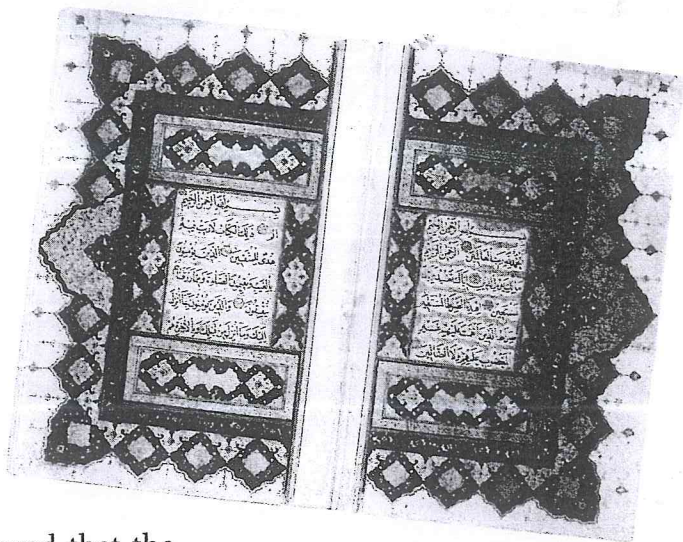
The Role of Women Before Islam, in most of Arab society, women were not regarded as equal to men, and female children were not valued. The Quran, however, taught that men and women were spiritually equal. It also gave women more rights under the law, such as the right to inherit property and to get an education. Muslim women could not be forced to marry against their will, and they had the right to divorce.

A Split Among Muslims You have already read about a schism that split the Christian church at the time of the Byzantine Empire. A schism, or split, also occurred among followers of Islam.

In 656, Uthman (OOTH mahn), the leader of the Muslim community, was assassinated. His death split the Muslim world in two. Muslims disagreed over who should be their rightful leader. Over the next several decades, two main groups gradually emerged on opposite sides of this disagreement.

The smaller group, called Shiites (SHEE yts), argued that the ruler should be a man who was a direct descendant of Muhammad. They believed that Muhammad's descendants would be inspired by God, just as Muhammad had been. They felt that their leader should explain the meanings of the messages Muhammad received from God, which are found in the Quran.

The larger group, called Sunnis (SOO neez), argued that any truly religious Muslim man of Muhammad's tribe could lead the community. They believed that no one man, not even the leader of Islam, should tell Muslims what God's messages meant. The Sunnis argued that a group of Muslim scholars could best explain the Quran. Today, about 85 percent of all Muslims are Sunnis.



Illustrated manuscript pages from a 1500s Quran

Reading Check What issues split the Shiites and Sunnis?

Section 2 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

Target Reading Skill

What did you predict about this section? How did your prediction guide your reading?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Note** What geographic feature covers most of the Arabian Peninsula?

(b) **Identify Effects** How did geography affect trade and settlement there?

(c) **Conclude** Why do you think the Bedouins became nomads?

2. (a) **Recall** What were the main events of Muhammad's life?

(b) **Synthesize** What are the main beliefs of Islam?

(c) **Compare and Contrast** What beliefs do Sunnis and Shiites share? Which beliefs separate them?

Writing Activity

Write a poem or a paragraph describing what it might have been like to travel in a caravan. How would it feel to ride a camel? To cross the desert? To stop for a rest at an oasis?

Writing Tip Review the illustrations in this section. Then think about the sights, sounds, and smells you would expect to experience as part of caravan life. Use vivid descriptive words and phrases to describe what you see and feel.

Section 3

The Golden Age of Muslim Civilization

Prepare to Read

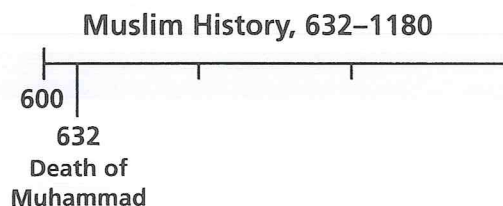
Objectives

In this section you will

1. Find out how the religion of Islam spread.
2. Learn about the golden age of Islam under the rule of the caliphs.

Taking Notes

As you read this section, jot down key events of early Muslim history and when they occurred. Copy the timeline below and use your data to complete it.



The cover of a book of verses by Omar Khayyam



Target Reading Skill

Preview and Ask

Questions Before you read this section, preview the headings and illustrations to see what the section is about. Then write two questions that will help you understand or remember something important in the section. For example, you might ask, "How did Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula?" Then read to answer your question.

Key Terms

- **Omar Khayyam** (OH mahr ky AHM) *n.* a Muslim poet, mathematician, and astronomer
- **caliph** (KAY lif) *n.* a Muslim ruler
- **Sufis** (SOO feez) *n.* a mystical Muslim group that believed they could draw closer to God through prayer, fasting, and a simple life

Almost one thousand years ago, Persia boasted great scientists, mathematicians, and poets. One man was all three. **Omar Khayyam** (OH mahr ky AHM) was a skilled Muslim astronomer, one of the most famous mathematicians in the world, and a great poet. The poems he wrote in the Persian language are still read today. This is one of his poems:

“When I was a child, I sometimes went to a teacher.
And sometimes I taught myself, but eventually I learned
The limits to all knowledge: we come into this world upon
the waters, we leave it on the wind.”

—Omar Khayyam

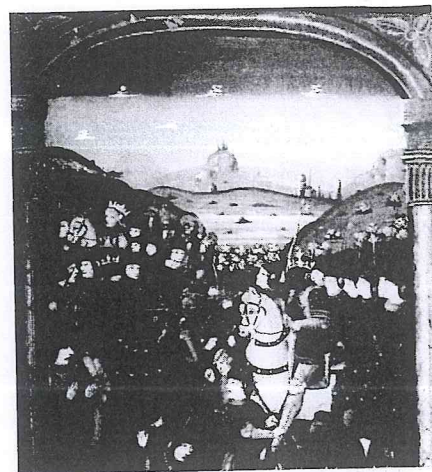
Although Khayyam writes of limits to knowledge, his was a time when mathematics, science, and poetry were all making new breakthroughs and expanding the boundaries of knowledge. It was called the golden age of Muslim civilization, and it took place across a wide geographic area.

The Spread of Islam

Within 150 years after Muhammad's death in 632, Islam spread west to North Africa, and into present-day Spain. It also spread north into Persia and east to the borders of northern India and China.

Many New Converts Arab merchants traveled to many parts of Asia and North Africa and along the Mediterranean coast. Many of these traders were Muslims, and they helped to spread their new religious beliefs. Arab armies also conquered neighboring regions. This was another way that Islam spread.

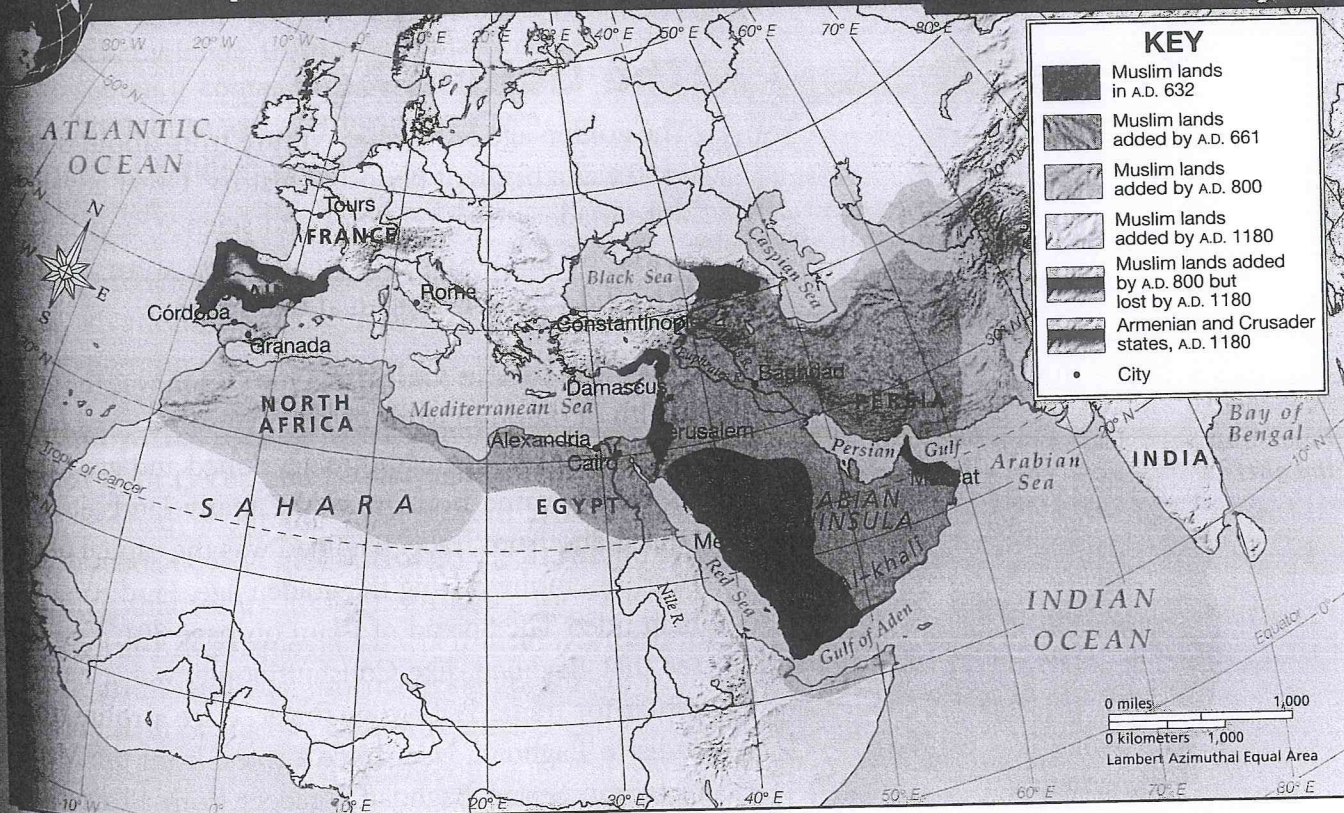
In 717, the Arabs attacked Constantinople, but they were unable to take the great fortress. Even so, most Christians who lived along the eastern and southern Mediterranean eventually converted to Islam. By the 700s, Muslims had also crossed from North Africa into Spain. In 732, Arab forces were defeated by European soldiers at the Battle of Tours, in present-day France. This battle halted the Muslim advance into Christian Europe.



The Battle of Tours

The Spread of Islam

MAP MASTER Skills Activity



Movement Islam began to spread even during Muhammad's lifetime. **Identify** When did Islam spread to North Africa? Where did the Muslims lose lands after 800? **Conclude** What role do you think the Mediterranean Sea played in the spread of Islam?

Go Online
PHSchool.com Use Web Code
lgp-8123 for step-by-step
map skills practice.



Preview and Ask Questions

Ask a question that will help you learn something important from the paragraph at the right. Now read the paragraph, and answer your question.

Reasons for Success In the centuries before Muhammad, Arab peoples had not been able to conquer neighboring regions. The strong Roman Empire made invasions of these lands nearly impossible. And the later Byzantine and Persian empires successfully blocked Arabs from advancing north. So why were the Muslims successful after Muhammad's death?

By that time, the three empires that might have stopped the Arab expansion north and east were either defeated or weakened. Also, a shared religion now united the Arab peoples into one community. And once they began to work together, the Muslims quickly grew powerful.

Under Muslim Rule Unlike Byzantine leaders of the time—who did not accept different religions—Muslims tolerated other faiths. Muslim rulers allowed Christians and Jews to practice their own religions and pursue their own business affairs. Non-Muslim citizens did have fewer rights than Muslims, however. For example, they were forbidden to carry weapons and could not serve in the military. They also paid a special tax, which helped support the government.

✓ **Reading Check** Compare Muslim rulers and Byzantine rulers.

A Royal Gift

The caliph Harun ar-Rashid presented this water jug to Charlemagne, the ruler of a Christian empire in Europe. He hoped to form an alliance with Charlemagne.

Infer What can you infer about Harun from this gift?



The Golden Age

The golden age of Muslim culture from about 800 to 1100 was a brilliant period of history. Great advances were made in mathematics and science, and lasting works of literature and architecture were created. Why did so much happen at that time?

The Age of the Caliphs One reason was the great wealth of the Arab world. Under Muslim rulers called **caliphs** (KAY lifs), an empire developed and grew rich. Its wealth came both from the many lands it controlled and from trade. Baghdad was the capital of the Muslim empire during the golden age. Find it on the map titled The Spread of Islam on page 301. You can see that Baghdad, like Constantinople, was a natural center for trade. With your finger, trace a route from India to Baghdad. Now trace a route from the Mediterranean Sea to Baghdad. Traders from all over the world brought their goods to the caliph's court. The caliph was considered to be Muhammad's successor, or the next person who had the right to rule.

Harun ar-Rashid: A Powerful Caliph

Harun ar-Rashid (hah ROON ar rah SHEED) became caliph of Baghdad in 786. His rule was a time of prosperity. For 23 years, Harun ruled the world's most glamorous court. He and his favorite subjects ate off gold plates and drank from goblets studded with jewels.

Harun did not use the riches of Baghdad just for his own pleasure. He was also a great patron, or supporter, of the arts. Harun paid many skilled writers, musicians, dancers, and artists to live in Baghdad. And he lavishly rewarded those whose works pleased him. One musician is said to have received a gift of 100,000 silver pieces for a single song.

Achievements of the Golden Age

Arab scholars not only created new works but also studied history and ideas from other cultures. One scholar wrote,

“We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples.”

—al-Kindi

This approach led Muslim scholars to make great advances in mathematics, in science, and in literature.

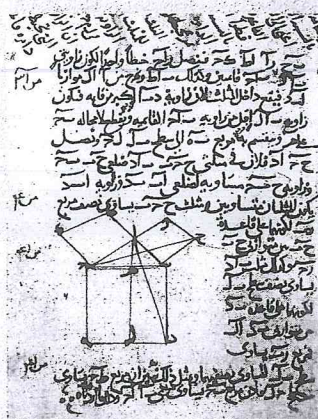
Mathematics and Science Arab scholars studied both Greek and Indian mathematics. They learned about the idea of zero from Indian scholars. And they borrowed the use of the so-called Arabic numerals that we use today from India, too. The Muslim mathematician al-Khwarizmi (al KWAHR iz mee) wrote a book explaining Indian arithmetic. He also made significant contributions to the development of algebra. The word *algebra* comes from the Arabic word “al-jabr.” These contributions enabled later scientists to make great discoveries in astronomy, physics, and chemistry.

The famous Islamic scientist and philosopher Ibn Sina (IB un SEE nah) lived from 980 to 1037. Also known as Avicenna (ahv ih SEN uh), he organized the medical knowledge of the Greeks and Arabs into the *Canon of Medicine*.

Arab Contributions to Mathematics and Science

Medicine

The Arabs were the first to organize separate pharmacies, which sold spices, herbs, and other medicines to the public.

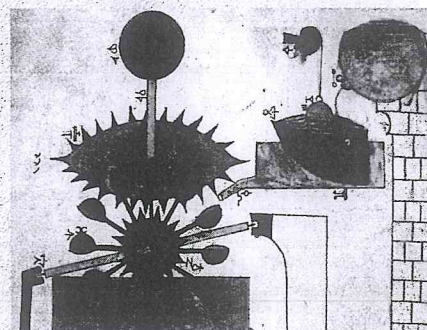


Mathematics

Arab mathematicians made important contributions to algebra. They studied formulas like this one. It explains how to find the length of one side of a right triangle when you know the length of the other sides.

Machines

Water-driven machines fascinated Arab scientists. Here, water falling into the cups causes the globe at the top to turn.



The World

Explorations of Faith Moses Maimonides (my MAHN uh deez) was a Jewish scholar, doctor, and philosopher. He lived in the Muslim-controlled lands of Spain, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. In 1180, he completed *The Torah Reviewed*, which classified and explained all the laws of Judaism. His *Guide for the Perplexed*, written in Arabic, tried to resolve reason and faith by exploring how people could believe in both science and religion at the same time. The Latin translation of the *Guide* influenced the Christian writers of the Scholastic movement of medieval Europe.



Literature Muslim writers created many lasting works of literature. Poetry was particularly important in the Islamic world. Poets were treated as popular musicians are today. One group of Muslims used poetry to teach their ideas and beliefs.

This group, called the **Sufis** (soo feez), were mystics who believed that they could draw close to God through prayer, fasting, and a simple life. They taught that the world will reveal its mysteries to careful observers. Sufi missionaries also helped spread Islam to Central Asia, India, and Africa south of the Sahara.

The most famous Sufi poet, Rumi (ROO mee), founded a religious group known to Europeans as the Whirling Dervishes. This group used music and dance to communicate with God. Rumi composed these verses:

“Never think the earth [empty] or dead—
It’s a hare, awake with shut eyes:
It’s a saucepan, simmering with broth—
One clear look, you’ll see it’s in [motion].”

—Rumi

✓ **Reading Check** What did the Sufis teach?



Section 3 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.



Target Reading Skill

What questions helped you learn something important from this section? What are the answers to your questions?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** Describe the two main ways that Islam spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula.

(b) **Predict** How might the culture of Europe be different today if the Arabs had won the Battle of Tours in 732?

2. (a) **Locate** Where is Baghdad located?

(b) **Synthesize Information** What made it a good choice for the capital of an empire?

(c) **Generalize** How do geography and trade contribute to a city’s prosperity and power?

3. (a) **Identify** Name three Arab contributions to mathematics and science.

(b) **Analyze** How do these contributions combine borrowed knowledge and new ideas?

Writing Activity

Write a newspaper editorial either for or against the use of government money to support the arts. Use Harun ar-Rashid as one example in your argument. Begin with a statement of your position and then support it with reasons and facts.

Go  **Online**
PHSchool.com

For: An activity on Islam’s golden age
Visit: PHSchool.com
Web Code: lgd-8103